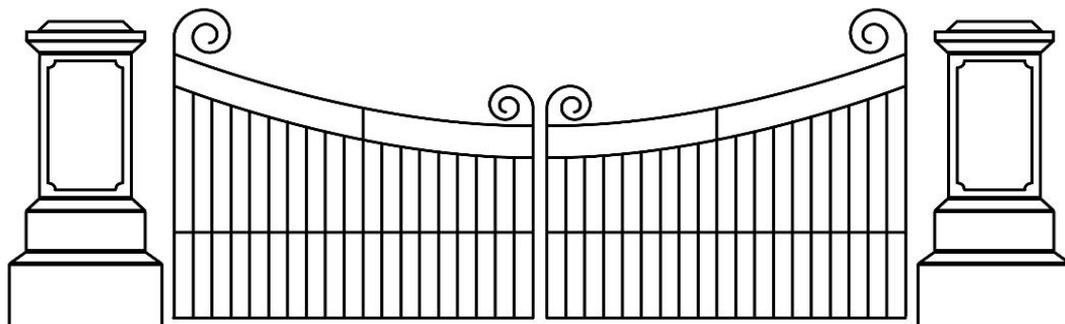


Preserving our past is our future



Chermside & Districts Historical Society Inc.

Website: <http://www.chermsidedistrict.org.au>

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NEWSLETTER

Dec-Jan 2011

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Located in the Chermside Historical Precinct at 61 Kittyhawk Drive, Chermside but DO NOT send post to this address. Printing courtesy of Cr Fiona King.

Vale Walter Bassinet 1918-2010

Wally was a foundation member of the Society and until recently regularly attended meetings. He contributed greatly to our archives with detailed descriptions of his family Warm Milk Dairy Farm; it was renowned for its hygiene. That was in the days when the dairy farmer used to produce the milk and deliver it to customers, morning and afternoon.

He joined the RAN in 1938 and was serving on HMAS Perth in the Atlantic when war was declared. They were near Jamaica and the British Admiralty ordered them to search for enemy shipping in South American waters so they went to war before Australia declared war. He was discharged in September 1946.

After the war he returned to civilian life and remained in Chermside. He was a well-known figure as he walked for exercise around the ridges of a morning.

Wal had a private funeral. We miss you old friend, farewell.

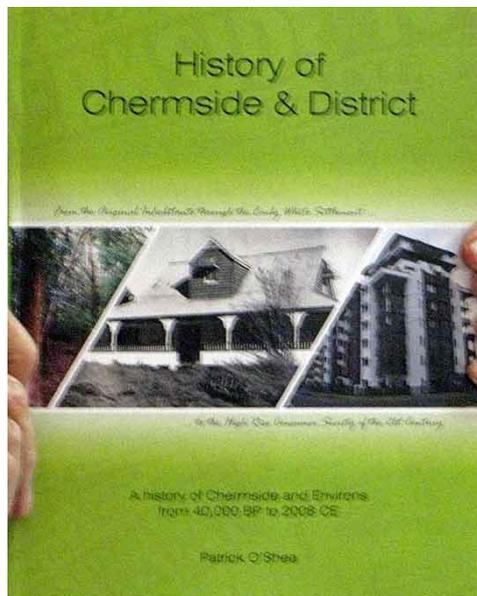
The Christmas Meeting got off to a rocky start when we arrived at Precinct to find the car park filled with shoppers heading to Westfield over the way. We opened the boom gate to allow our members to park behind the Drill Hall and Mavis Rye volunteered to be the Sergeant at Arms and direct our members in but keep the shoppers out.



To perform this function Mavis needed some authorisation so Bev Isdale quickly printed off a document stating that this was a private car park and this lady was acting on the direction of the CDHS. It worked and the traffic ran smoothly.

Meanwhile inside the school the usual rowdy crowd was being, rowdy, so they were called to order by the Head Teacher ringing the old School Bell. He then explained how it was rung to farewell Norm Pfingst at his funeral.

The author of the History of Chermside, who was also acting chairman, showed the first copy to go on sale. He walked the members through the book



explaining the importance of the various parts. Authors like to do this and the members listened patiently, at least no one went to sleep. At the end of the meeting members

lined up to pay \$25 to the treasurer, who likes to do this, and then to the author for his signature; readers like to do this. (*The fingers in the photo belong to the author.*)

Christmas party (Photos by John Bencke)

Owing to the rain and the wetness of the ground we were unable to have our party out the back in the shade of the school, so we had it inside and on the front veranda. There was plenty of room

The two baskets of goodies that the members filled up for raffle prizes were over filled so we extended the prize list from 2 to 5 prizes. Two paintings one by Rona Arndt and one by Herb Carr, with a bottle of wine each, were raffled separately and a copy of the History of Chermside was a fifth prize. This spread the goodies nicely around the members.

The raffle netted about \$300 and the George Marchant Lecture took about \$500 so we are ending the year financially in front. Then there are the book sales which have so far netted \$1,325

Bus Trip to the Three Dams Note this is **not** the Three Gorges Dam, that's in China. It will be

on Friday 18th March from the Precinct 2011. Terry Hampson has been doing the rounds and the Water Authority has agreed to conduct a tour – more details from Terry at the February meeting.



Part of the crowd at the Christmas Party Meeting.

The Three Carbineers

Research on Lutwyche Cemetery is continuing for the website with the latest discovery being the grave of Lieutenant George Witton. You might remember the movie “Breaker Morant” produced in 1979 which centred on Lieutenants Harry Morant, George Witton and Peter Handcock. The three Australians were members of the Bushveldt Carbineers who were sentenced to death by firing squad. While Morant and Handcock were shot Witton had his sentence commuted to life imprisonment in England. However, Australia protested vigorously and he was sent home, set free but never pardoned nor was the verdict overturned.

The name Bushveldt Carbineers probably meant something like the Australian Bushmen armed with Carbines. The latter are short barrelled rifles used by horsemen, the short weapon was easier to carry and holster on horseback, while the shooting might be done on foot. This was not an Australian unit but was recruited in South Africa and included some Australians who finished their term of service and then joined the new unit rather than return home.

The irregular unit adapted the tactics of Boer Commandos and fought them on their own turf, the Bushveldt. The fighting was not always ‘Marquis of Queensbury rules’, both sides could get very rough indeed; this was war ‘to the knife’. The Carbineers were not directly controlled by the British Army but ranged over long distances living off the land and fighting wherever they found the enemy, or wherever the enemy found them.

George Witton came to live in the Biggenden area about 100km west of Maryborough where he was

a prominent farmer until about 1934. He then returned to his native Victoria where he died in 1942. His ashes were interred in the grave of his first wife, Mary who died in 1931. The headstone is unusual in that his name is not recorded on it although the Brisbane City Council records that the ashes were interred there on the 1st October 1942.



Sequel: A petition has been lodged with the British Parliament at Westminster for a review of the 1902 trial. The petition was discussed in the House of Commons on 15th March 2010 and a decision is awaited.

George Witton in later life (Courtesy of Boer War Memorial Association)

Post Script. After being reminded by Colleen O’Leary of the BWMA that Kitchener Road bordered the Lutwyche Cemetery, I added the following note to the website.

Ironic End Piece

The names of George Witton and Lord Kitchener were irretrievably linked in life.

Now they are again linked in death.

Field Marshall Horatio Herbert Kitchener, 1st Earl Kitchener was drowned on the 5th June 1916 when the warship, HMS Hampshire, on which he was travelling to Russia, struck a German mine west of the Orkney Islands, Scotland. He was 65 years old and died like a soldier; his grave is the North Sea.

Lieutenant George Ramsdale Witton died on the 14th August 1942 as a civilian aged 68 years. His grave is in Lutwyche Cemetery, Brisbane which is bounded on the north side by Kitchener Road.

Two old soldiers who came from the ends of the earth!!



The Field Marshall in full dress uniform was an awesome figure. He dominated all he surveyed and to the English he personified the British Army. (Courtesy Wikipedia)

Little Creeks and a Big Flood

The Three Little Creeks of our immediate area, Kedron Brook, Downfall Creek and Cabbage Tree Creek are all isolated from the big creek, aka Brisbane River. Consequently the former were spared the devastation wrought by the latter. We were able to carry on our lifestyle more or less unhindered while a few hills away a world scale disaster was slowly unfolding which we could watch on the miracle of television.

We have been spared the horrors of having to abandon our houses at very short notice and seek refuge in emergency accommodation; we did not become refugees in our own city.

The speed of the flood caught everybody by surprise as no one foresaw the disaster that suddenly engulfed Toowoomba; the City of Flowers became the Flash Flood or Tsunami city. Then part of the water continued down the escarpment into the Lockyer Valley smashing all in its path.

Wivenhoe Dam did its job as planned but it could not control the water coming down the Lockyer Valley or the Bremer River; it was not planned to do that. Nor can the best laid plans etc., deal with the ‘storm of the century’. Climate is a complicated topic and we don’t fully understand how it works nor can we foresee all the events that happen such as the Toowoomba disaster. We can’t cover all the possibilities so we have to live with some measure of risk.

The Brisbane River has had many floods and Wikipedia lists the major ones as:

- January 1841
- March 1890
- February 1893
- February 1931
- January 1974
- January 2011

Since much of Brisbane is built on the floodplain of the river it gets flooded. So what happens when the clean-up is finished – do we rebuild, put up levees, move to higher ground, build more dams, move the river or the city?

However, a couple of things are very clear:

- If we build on a flood plain we will get floods and maybe flooded out.
- We have to work with not against nature; nature always wins in the long run.

In fifty years or so the history of the latest flood may be written and by then people will have had time to see the results of our post flood efforts. Will Brisbane be a better and safer place or will we do a patch up job and return to business as usual?

Perhaps fifty years is too soon to make the judgement. It is said that Mao Tse-tung was once asked if he thought the French Revolution (1789-99) was a success. He replied “It is too soon to tell.” Maybe it is an apocryphal story but it illustrates the fact that the judgements of history take a long time to make and have to be constantly revised as new material comes to light.

Launch of the History of Chermside & District

Everybody is invited to the launch.

When: Saturday 12th February 10am – 12noon.

Where: Chermside Library – Cr Hamilton Road and Kittyhawk Drive, Chermside

Guest Speaker: Prof. Peter Spearritt (Historian University of Q’ld)

Admission by Donation

Bruce Pie Industries Ltd

The latest addition to our website will be the story of Bruce Pie and his factory, when I have finished putting it all together.

We have had a file on the Pie factory for a long time but recently the National Library of Australia installed a new search engine called Trove on their website. This, along with the digitisation of a huge number of newspapers, including The Brisbane Courier and the Courier Mail, has enabled us to accumulate much more information. It is possible to follow the story of a person or a firm from year to year, pick out the relevant data and record what we need.

Arthur Bruce Pie was a dynamic personality who came to Brisbane at the age of 20 in 1922 as a representative of a firm of importers in Melbourne.

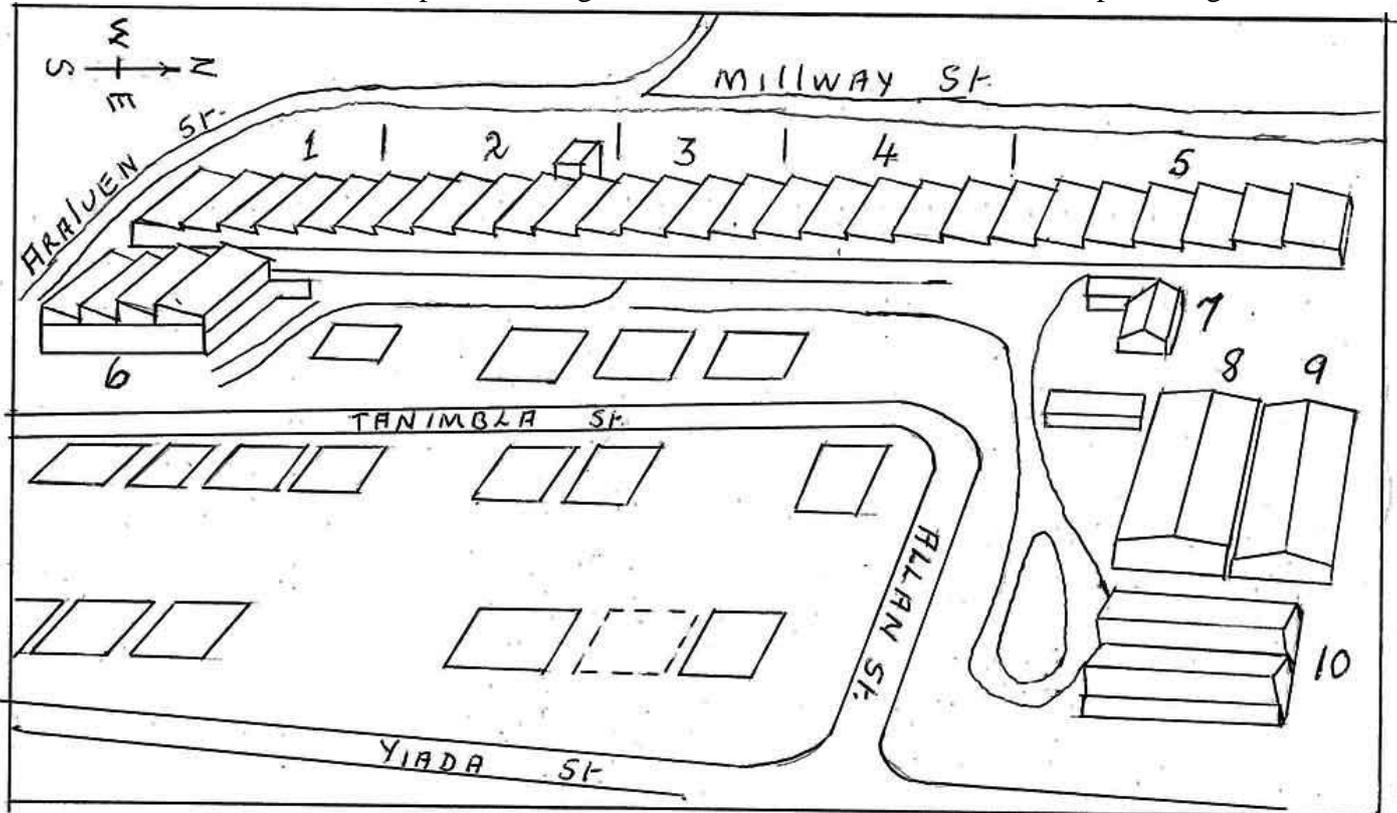
In 1924 he married Jean Margaret Wright and they raised a family of seven children. In about 1929 he launched the Queensland Textile Co. Pty. Ltd in Melbourne Street, South Brisbane. In the following year a new company, The Australian Bedding Co (Q’ld) Ltd opened for business in Gibson Street, Woolloongabba. Business prospered, and a move was made first to Margaret Street, City in 1930, then to 8 McLachlan Street, Fortitude Valley in 1934.

The real progress came with the move to Bohland Street, Kedron in 1948 where the parent company was later to be registered as Bruce Pie Industries Ltd incorporating the Australian Bedding Co (Q’ld) Ltd. With the final move to Araluen Street, Kedron, Bruce Pie Industries Ltd became a major textile manufacturer with five departments, scouring, spinning, knitting, mattress and make-up. The coil springs for inner spring mattresses were also manufactured in the make-up department.

The firm gradually expanded with further buildings and employment increased from an initial 300 workers in 1948 and an annual payroll of 300,000 pounds (\$6million in 2010 values) to about 837 workers in 1964 when the firm was sold. The payroll would have been considerably larger.



This aerial photo was taken in 1960 shortly before Bruce Pie died in 1962 and the firm was sold in 1964. The long main building admitted natural light from above and through the large side windows. The whole site occupied 50 acres () and Bruce Pie intended to use all of it. What was left over from the factory was for housing and recreation areas. He was very conscious of employee welfare and provided many amenities for the workers such as canteen, profit sharing, medical facilities, recreation and cheap housing.



The above sketch is taken from the photo, is not to scale and is somewhat distorted. Some streets are made while others are just tracks. No. 1 Spinning Mill, 2. Knitting Mill, 3. Dye House, 4. Make Up or Finishing Dept, 5. Mattress, Bedding and Eiderdown Dept. 6. The Boiler House, Engineering Workshop and Display Rooms, 7. Canteen, 8. The Spring Works, 9. Kapok storage, 10. Garnetting Factory. Houses.

The effect of Bruce Pie Industries Ltd on the local community was enormous. It provided income for a large number of workers and local businesses where the workers bought their goods. It gave many young people their training in trades and machining skills that they could use for the rest of their lives.

It was the largest knitting mill in the Southern Hemisphere and replaced a 50 acre piggery which had 300 pigs but did not employ many people. It was part of the change over from primary to secondary production that was going on in the region.

Bruce Pie was a man of vision and had the ability to turn the vision into reality. He not only led in business but also in politics.

Bruce Pie was elected to the Queensland Parliament in 1941 as an Independent for the seat of Hamilton. He resigned in 1943 to contest the federal seat of Brisbane but failed to be elected. Elected for the seat of Windsor as a member of the Queensland People's party he became the leader in 1946.

He was a dynamic politician advocating policies such as raising the status of women, trade training for ex-servicemen, supported arbitration, and the 40 hour week. He resigned the leadership of the QPP and, in 1950 was later elected as member for Kedron.

He strongly objected to politicians voting salary rises in 1948 and 1950 and resigned from the Liberal Party. Finally in 1951 he resigned from parliament.

BREAK – 1953 to 1962 – Data to be found.

Arthur Bruce Pie died of a heart attack while in Sydney on 31/7/1962 but the firm continued production and by 1964 was employing 837 employees. That same year Felt and Textiles of Australia Limited offered one ordinary five shilling share in Felt & Textiles plus three shillings for each share in Bruce Pie industries Limited. It was an offer the directors of BPI intended to accept themselves and advised the shareholders to do so. They did and the ownership of Bruce Pie's creation changed hands and the machinery was dismantled with most of it going to New Zealand or Melbourne.

Watch the website for further details when we find them.

Questions looking for answers!

Did J V Plucknett the blacksmith go into carriage building?



J V Plucknett Body Builders, Chermiside – logo on Thornycroft Truck built for Caboolture Shire Council (Doug Packer – original)

This photo says he was bodybuilding. Can anyone remember? If so please contact Pat.



A large concrete floor 14.53m (47ft4ins) East West and 10.7m (34ft 7ins) North South. Remains of walls on three sides may have been a building. In 7th Brigade Park near the John Wesley Retirement Home, Halsmere St Geebung Local name is the WWII Camp Cook House but there is no sign of it on the maps of the camp in our records.

Could have been built after WWII when there were a lot of homeless people housed in the dis-used camp. Has a basketball hoop at one end. Anybody know anything? Contact Pat.